



**Connecticut State
Dental Association**

**Legislative Testimony
Appropriations Committee
Governor's Bill No. 7027 – An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium
Ending June Thirtieth 2019, and Making Appropriations Therefor
Thursday, February 23, 2017**

Dear Senator Formica, Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

Allow me to introduce myself, I am Dr. Deborah Redford-Badwal, a faculty at the University of Connecticut Health Center and a Pediatric Dentist as well as a member of the Connecticut State Dental Association, a statewide, professional membership organization representing a vast majority of all licensed dentists in Connecticut. I have been teaching and practicing dentistry in Connecticut for over 30 years. I am writing today to voice my support for the original mandate for the HAVEN program (Conn. Gen. Stat. Sec. 19a-12a in 2007), and to oppose the Governor's budget proposal to eliminate funding to an organization which helps healthcare professionals who suffer from chronic physical/mental illness and substance abuse; to repeal mandated reporting, eliminate the professional assistance account and to move the existing and future dedicated HAVEN funds (generated by the increase in license fee) to the general fund. Prior to the passage of 19a-12a, many of the professionals with these conditions, would require resources of the Department of Public Health, so in 2015, the membership organizations, worked together to address this important need and support their colleagues. The organizations did not object to a \$5.00 increase in licensing fees (despite the reality that Connecticut has one of the highest licensing fees in the country), on the condition that the funds would pass through Department of Public Health (DPH) and go to HAVEN. Public Acts 15-244 Sections 137, and Public Act 15-5 Sec. 479 were developed so that the professionals could be assured that the \$5.00 was being invested in the health and wellness of themselves or their colleagues and not re-directed by the DPH or by the needs of the general fund. Unfortunately, since its effective date, October 1, 2015, the DPH has not transferred ANY funds to HAVEN and the amounts in the fund now exceeds \$800,000, yet each of our license renewal costs us the \$5.00 increase targeted to go to HAVEN.

HAVEN has helped numerous Health Professionals, but its continued existence is in jeopardy. I have personally been a faculty member of a parallel program developed at the UCONN Health Center called CHIPs (Confidential Help and Information for Professional Students) for pre-professional candidates in training. We as a society have come to realize that these physical, mental and addictive afflictions can be a lifelong issue and having HAVEN continue its vital mission is in the best interest of the profession and the citizens of Connecticut. We have paid the increase in fees as mandated, even with the extremely high license fees, and have done it willingly to allow for this program to continue. To have this bilateral agreement be dissolved without mutual agreement and/or a return of funds is wrong and should not be allowed. Please consider this when you vote; it is in the best interest of the public that the health professionals have the availability of HAVEN as a resource.

Respectfully Submitted,

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